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AUTHOR Malone, Bobby G.; Sharp, William; Thompson, Jay C., Jr.
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ABSTRACT

Principals, aspiring principals, and superintendents completed surveys investigating the state of the principalship in Indiana. Respondents rank-ordered selected skills and personal traits necessary to succeed as school principals. Perceived barriers for principal candidates were compared by group. A total of 581 principals, 55 aspiring principals, and 221 superintendents participated. Principals and aspiring principals considered honesty and leadership very important personality traits. They also believed that communication skills and instructional improvement were the most important factors in training principals, and they considered job stress, too much time required, and insufficient compensation the most important barriers. Superintendents and principals differed in how they rated the impact of barriers. Superintendents believed that the number one barrier to someone entering the principalship was too few experienced teachers interested in becoming assistant principals or principals. Job satisfaction among principals was high. A majority of principals did not plan to remain in the principalship beyond 10 years, though almost half intended to remain in their current positions until retirement. Average experience plus age indicated that a high percentage of principals were eligible for retirement. Three-quarters of aspiring principals thought their principalship preparation program had prepared them to succeed as principals. (Contains 25 references.) (SM)

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The Indiana Principalship: Perceptions of Principals, Aspiring Principals, and Superintendents

A Paper Presentation to the Midwestern Educational Research Association (MWERA)

Prepared by:
Bobby G. Malone
William Sharp
Jay C. Thompson, Jr.

Ball State University
Muncie, Indiana

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ABSTRACT

The Indiana Principalship: Perceptions of Principals, Aspiring Principals, and Superintendents.

Authors: Bobby G. Malone — Department of Educational Leadership, Ball State University
William Sharp — Department of Educational Leadership, Ball State University
Jay C. Thompson, Jr. — Department of Educational Studies, Ball State University

Principals, aspiring principals and superintendents responded to surveys seeking to address the state of the principalship in Indiana. Principal and aspiring principal respondents were asked to rank-order selected skills and personal traits necessary to be successful as a school principal. Perceived barriers for candidates considering the principalship as a career are compared from the standpoint of the three groups responding. Differences in the importance of the barriers provide an interesting perspective for discussion. Superintendent and principal responses showed varied as to the impact of the barriers. The number one barrier as perceived by superintendents for someone entering the principalship was "too few experienced teachers interested in becoming assistant principals or principals." The number one barrier for principals and aspiring principals was "job too stressful." Responses were received from 581 principals, 55 aspiring principals, and 221 superintendents. Job satisfaction among the principals was high. Average experience plus ages reported by the principal respondents indicate a high percentage of the principals in Indiana are eligible for retirement. The picture of supply and demand in the Indiana principalship mirrors the crisis reflected at the national level. Instruments used in the study are available.

The Indiana Principalship: Perceptions Of Principals, Aspiring Principals, And Superintendents

Bobby G. Malone,
William Sharp
Jay C. Thompson, Jr.
Ball State University

Introduction

The knowledge base for principalship training, Principals for Our Changing Schools, (1994), provided a focused picture of the enormous nature of the school principal's job. In states where educational reform is being implemented, more often than not, the principal's job is at the forefront of change (Haller, Brent, & McNamara, 1997). With the widespread changes in teaching methods and course content, the principal struggles to remain current or risks becoming an archaic, non-helping partner in the instructional process. The principal is asked to focus on the teaching-learning process, to demonstrate risk-taking and flexibility, to encourage diversity and equity, and to reflect and engage in systematic inquiry and moral deliberation (Jacobson, 1996).

The decade of the 1990s was permeated with the philosophy of teacher empowerment. While one may agree with the philosophy of teacher empowerment, the changes that it entails for the principalship are far-reaching. Decision-making is slower because more people are involved in the process. It is different because of the variety of inputs the principal must consider. Simply managing the calendar for groups who want to be involved becomes very time-consuming. The shifting of responsibilities from the central office to the building level encumbers time on the principal's schedule that is already pushed to the limit.

The principal is expected to be an instructional leader. While this expectation is at the heart of most reform efforts today, many educators question the validity of expecting the principal to play such an intensive role. Maynes, McIntosh, and Maupin (1996) suggested that principals retain the sensitive, highly charged elements of clinical supervision, and to delegate less meaningful and more trivial tasks to subordinates. If the principal abdicates the instructional leader's role or delegates it to a subordinate, a powerful message is sent to teachers as to the importance of the instructional program.

The principal's position is critical to quality education, but the challenges of the position are causing potential candidates to rethink their decision about entering the field. When one compares the rewards of the principal's position to those of a teacher, the principalship is not viewed positively either from a financial, physical wear-and-tear, or psychological point of view. A comparison of a teacher's salary to a principal's salary leads one to conclude that the daily rate of difference in pay is insignificant in attracting candidates into administration. When the responsibilities of the two jobs are compared, the financial benefits of entering educational administration simply are not realistic.

Two-income families have become the societal norm over the past 30 years. In the past, if the administrator decided to make a career move, the spouse followed. Today's situation is quite different. The so-called trailing spouse often earns as much or more on a daily basis than the administrator. Moving to another region might be a career opportunity for the administrator, but may require the spouse to resign from a position that contributes substantially to the family income (McAdams, 1998). Couple this with a situation where both husband and wife are school administrators combined with nepotism rules in many school districts and the couple may not be able to relocate. Locating two jobs is not an easy task.

Demands and rewards of the job

The principal's job is challenging and demanding; while the demands are great, the challenges hold potential for a high degree of personal reward. The principal is expected to be an instructional leader, a motivator, a lay psychologist, a public relations expert, and an excellent manager. Suffice it to say the principalship is a lifestyle. The satisfaction one receives from seeing young teachers and administrators develop into effective and competent professionals is an area that is lightly explored in the professional literature. Such satisfaction is seldom addressed in interview questions that are posed to potential candidates. Physical aspects of the job can hardly be described as incentives. The principal's typical workday may be as long as 18

hours. It may involve dealing with insufferable parents, even if only a few, and a small number of intolerable students. However, the occasional crisis, balanced against the numerous rewards from working with outstanding teachers, wonderful students and supportive parents, can be a powerful enticement to enter the field.

The psychological aspects of being a principal can be much like a roller coaster ride. As the principal leads the faculty, hopefully, he/she can have a competent, vibrant and hardworking staff whose main purpose is what is best for the students. Serious issues like collective bargaining, financial stress on the family, one-parent families, and other problems become part of the principal's work life. The principal is at the forefront as an instructional leader. When he/she is known only as a public relations agent, as a custodial leader, or simply as a business manager, the school may be out of focus and effectiveness is hindered. Nevertheless, these are duties that are expected of principals.

The duties of the principal may seem overwhelming, but the appeal of the job needs to be understood in its true context. Today's principal must perform duties where previous training for such duty may have been nonexistent. Working with a site-based council, for example, assumes the ability to identify leadership skills in others. The principal must have the skills and knowledge needed to be an effective leader, and even then, observation of the individual on the job may be the only true indicator of whether this person can lead.

Principal preparation programs

Given the changing nature of the school environment, it is impossible to prepare inexperienced principals for every problem they will encounter or every initiative they will undertake. Societal forces and conditions constantly reshape the arena in which a principal works. Static patterns are out; so too, is the notion that solving today's problems automatically prepares candidates for future challenges (Principals for Our Changing Schools, 1994).

The principalship consists of skills and competencies that are organized in a useful way, preferably into work patterns that make for relevant and functional knowledge. Professional preparation programs for principals should instruct candidates through classroom formats, clinical practices, and field experiences in the practical knowledge and skills needed to address the daily challenges they will face (Daresh, 1997).

Muse and Thomas (1991) asserted that traditional training programs offered at universities were not appropriate. Internships should be full time for at least a semester, and candidates should be placed in selected school settings with competent mentor principals. However, the reality of some placement situations may not allow the luxury of a mentor principal working with an intern in his/her own building. The administrator who has to leave the building and drive a distance to mentor the intern is in a difficult position. Concentrating on his/her own principal's job while providing a quality experience for the intern is difficult within the principal's own building much less having to go to a different site. Few individuals in the profession would deny the need for such critical mentoring, however.

The preceding discussion of the principal's role draws attention to the principal's ever-changing job. For a select few, the change may be healthy; for others, the change may be intimidating. The number of candidates going into principal preparation programs give clues as to the impending crisis: There are not enough candidates to fill the positions as natural attrition and dropouts occur. There is also a question as to the quality of the candidates in the existing applicant pool (Educational Research Service, 1998).

The conversation often heard among superintendents is based around the question, "Where is your next principal coming from?" Many decry the fact that not only is the pool of candidates small in number; there is also a severe limit of talent within the pool. With small number of applicants to choose from, school districts are looking at ways of "growing their own." Johnson and Douglas (1990) discussed a model in which school districts attempt to

identify individuals who have demonstrated leadership skills and find incentives to encourage them to pursue careers in educational administration.

Any superintendent hiring a principal is looking for the right candidate, the perfect fit. The desirable candidates are individuals who can recognize problems and face those problems with inspired leadership and hard work. These individuals hold a pronounced belief system committed to children, teaching and teachers. One of the fundamental concepts underlying leadership theory centers on the effectiveness of the leader to inspire a shared "vision" of an uplifting and ennobling future and then to enlist others in the vision by appealing to their values, interests, hopes, and dreams (Kouzes & Posner, 1997).

As one scans the candidate pool from the elementary school to the middle school to the high school level, the number of candidates had decreased (Educational Research Service). Not only does the number dwindle, but also there is a reduction in terms of the applicants by race and gender. Few minorities are entering the principalship. Nationally, females constitute the majority of the teaching workforce; yet, the ratio of female principals remains low. The vast majority of female candidates aspire to the elementary or middle school level (NCES, January. 1994). The ramifications of this dynamic are vast. The secondary principalship is viewed as the most favorable position from which to become superintendent. A central office position offers a close second, perhaps the middle school principalship a distant third, but the elementary principalship assuredly a distant fourth (Malone & Caddell, 1999). Considering the fact that most females enter the principalship at the elementary level, the number of females becoming superintendents in the future seems limited. Hiring practices of male and female superintendents is an area lightly explored in research, but if past behavior is a true yardstick, female superintendents might have less hesitancy in hiring females to head a high school.

Demographics

Demographics of the principalship (NCES, 1993-94) published in 1996 presented alarming figures. Overall, males constituted 60.9% of all principals. At the secondary level however, males constituted 83.2% of the principals, of which 89% were White. In rural or small towns, the figures were even higher (91.2 % at the secondary level, of which 93.5 were White). The statistical breakdown in the NCES study did not include information by state concerning gender and race at all school levels.

The issue of supply and demand for principals is greatly influenced by retirement plans. In the NCES study, when principals were asked about their future retirement plans, approximately 35% indicated they would retire within 5 years and another 30% in 6-10 years. The 1999-2000 year is the midpoint of the projections. Another view of these data indicated 79% of those who responded to the survey in 1993-94 indicated they intended to retire within 15 years. The percentage seems rather large to have more than three-fourths of the entire principal workforce indicating retirement within less than one-half of a normal career. Examining the data from another viewpoint, the average age of principals is related to the retirement laws of the respective states. No projections as to the effects of early retirement incentives on the workforce of principals were available at the time of the study.

What about tomorrow?

As the United States enters the new millennium, school officials, and educators, in general, are once again asked to meet the challenges of the future. Nowhere is the challenge more intense than the need for strong school leadership to prepare students to appreciate and face the future with courage and confidence. Results of current research studies point to the need for visionary and progressive school principals. The old adage "As goes the principal, so goes the school" rings with veracity as the clamor for school reform and a sharp focus on accountability demand center stage.

Lezotte (1984), in the effective schools literature, indicated that the most important factor in school reform was the leadership of the principal. Chubb (1987) argued that good schools have good principals, great schools have great principals, and weak schools have weak principals.

Essentially, the principal is the key figure in school improvement (Barth, 1990; Sergiovanni, 1995). While the effective schools literature serves to highlight the critical role of the principal in school reform, Haller, Brent & McNamara (1997) found graduate training in administration had little or no influence on effective school attributes.

The professional literature is replete with the importance of the principal's leadership, but the issue of outstanding candidates to fill the principal's position is an intense problem. The problem is not only an issue of numbers of candidates; it is also an issue of quality of candidates within the applicant pool. Anderson (1991) maintained that the pool of principal candidates was large and that many individuals possessed the required certification, but there was reason to believe the number of highly capable applicants was dwindling.

The National Association of Secondary School Principals and the National Association of Elementary School Principals recently (1998) sought definitive data regarding the supply and demand issue of the principalship. A national telephone survey affirmed the anecdotal information that there was a shortage of qualified candidates for principal vacancies in the United States.

Superintendents and other central office administrators responded to several factors that discourage potential principal applicants. Chief among these factors was inadequate compensation when compared to the responsibilities of the position, the stress of the job, and the long hours required (Educational Research Service, 1998).

The Bureau of Labor Statistics projected a 10%-20% increase in the need for school administrators through the year 2005. This projection was the same for other occupations, but

could fall far short of the actual demand for school administrators. The number of school principals rose from 1988 to 1993 by 2.2%. The number of assistant principals is expected to grow by the year 2005 as districts hire additional assistant principals rather than open new schools to help with an increasing workload and expanding student enrollment (Educational Research Service, 1998).

The issue of principal and assistant principal supply and demand is a complicated one. Most prospective educational leaders are self-selected due to a lack of leader recruitment programs or research about the recruitment of school administrators (Murphy, 1992). In *A Place Called School*, John Goodlad stated,

> "It is simply not established procedure in the educational system to identify and groom cadres of the most promising prospects for top positions…There should be a concerted effort to identify employees with leadership potential. Using peer recognition as a starting point for identification, districts must be willing to make an investment designed to pay off in the future" (Goodlad, 1984 pp. 306-307).

The problem

Nationally, the school principalship could be an imperiled position. Analysis of current data revealed two sides of the problem: scarcity of candidates going into the principalship as a career choice, and a dearth of talent in the current pool of candidates. Attempts to explore the problem have utilized mixed methodologies from qualitative interviews, to in-depth case studies, to quantitative data from extensive surveys of those who currently hold the position. Current data are unavailable but the latter approach was published in the NCES report for 1993-94. That report contained data from 1993-94; however, it was not published until 1996 (NCES 96-124). Questions that were addressed in the study represent dated information; similar information concerning the principalship in Indiana was not available.

The stated purpose of this study was to provide updated information regarding the principalship in Indiana. Results of the study are projected to add new information essential to understanding the current situation. If Indiana education officials decide to address the problem, what actions are needed to entice future candidates into preparation programs while providing a sufficient number of candidates to fill positions that are currently available? The intent of the study was to provide accurate information that could be used as a basis for long-range planning. A necessary part of planning is to determine how to secure candidates who possess or can develop the acumen and skills that are essential for effective leadership.

Procedures

The study included data from: 1) superintendents who had hired a principal in the past three years, 2) individuals who were currently serving in the position of principal, and 3) aspiring principals who were in the process of obtaining an Indiana principal license. Superintendents suggested adding the aspiring principals group to the study from the perspective of students who had chosen the principalship as a career. The superintendent respondents thought the aspiring principals might have a different point of view from either the superintendents or principals.

Information was collected from students in the preparation programs at Ball State University, Indiana University, Indiana State University, and Purdue University. The aspiring principals represented the different preparation programs in Indiana, but should not be construed as a systematic or random sample.

Three groups were surveyed as follows: the aspiring principals (100) in their administration classes, all Indiana public school superintendents (293), and members of the Indiana Association of School Principals (1017). The principals included only members of the Indiana Association of School Principals (all principals in Indiana are not IASP members). Members of this professional organization comprised over half of the principals in Indiana schools.

Instrumentation

Three survey instruments were developed: one each for superintendents, principals, and aspiring principals. Drafts of the surveys were composed and reviewed by superintendents, principals, and higher education personnel. The reviews and critiques allowed for critical changes. Drafts of the instruments were then submitted to experts in psychometrics and instrument construction for additional critique and revision.

Through the assistance of the Indiana Association of School Principals and the Indiana Association of Public School Superintendents, survey instruments were mailed to every school principal who was a member of IASP and every superintendent in a public school in Indiana. Demographic variables in the instruments allowed grouping of the data, i.e. various levels of schooling, age, gender, years of experience, number of years until retirement, and years in the principalship.

Two-hundred-and-twenty-one (221) of 293 superintendents completed and returned the surveys -- a return rate of 75%. Returns from principals totaled 581 out of a possible 1017 -- a return rate of 57%. The aspiring principals were surveyed in their classes and the collaborating instructors were asked to return the completed survey. Responses were received for a total of 55 students, a return rate of 55%. The demographic profile of the principals who responded to the survey resulted in the following data:

Demographic characteristics of Indiana principals

Ethnic Group:	98.6% White, .9% African American .3% Hispanic
Average Age:	49 years
Gender:	29.4% Women 70.2% Men

Place of Birth:	77.3% Indiana	
	5.2% Illinois	
	4.1% Kentucky	
	2.8% Ohio	
Marital Status:	90.4% Married	
	3.4% Single	
	5.2% Divorced	
	.7% Widowed	
Professional Education:	Masters Degree	43.2%
	Specialist Degree	27.2%
	Doctor's Degree	8.1%
	Principal's License Only	20.9%
Age When You Became a Principal:	Under 30	14.5%
	30 to 40	48.4%
	41 to 50	31.7%
	Over 50	4.6%
Number of Years Served as Principal:	Less than 3 years	13.3%
	3 to 10 years	43.4%
	11 to 20 years	28.1%
	21 or More years	14.8%
Number of Years as Principal of your Current School:	First Year	12.0%
	1 to 5 Years	39.4%
	6 to 10 Years	25.0%
	11 or More Years	23.1%
Teaching Experience Prior to Becoming a Principal:	Elementary	50.9%
	Middle School	39.9%
	High School	47.0%
	Other	.7%
Total Years of Experience in Education:	Less than 5 Years	.2%
	5 to 16 Years	15.8%
	17 to 27 Years	46.0%
	28 or More Years	37.9%

DISCUSSION

The national scene

The literature review revealed salient points that are germane to a study of the principalship. Among the most outstanding were the following:

1) The principal is crucial to school and student success regardless of the grade level.

2) The issue of principal and assistant principal supply and demand is complex.

3) Over one-half of all public school principals were projected to retire during the 1990s.

4) There is an indication in the research that an adequate number of persons are *certified* to fill current and future principal vacancies.

5) The average age of principals has been rising over the past few years.

6) The NCES study of 1993-94 indicated 55% of all principals planned to remain as principals or until retirement, regardless of gender, years of experience, or age.

7) Most prospective educational leaders are self-selected due to a lack of leader recruitment programs or research about recruitment of school administrators.

8) Most new principals are likely to have participated in a local aspiring principals' program.

9) Males constitute a large majority of school principals and most are White; African-Americans and Hispanics account for less than 12% of all principals.

10) The percentage of new principals who are female has been increasing.

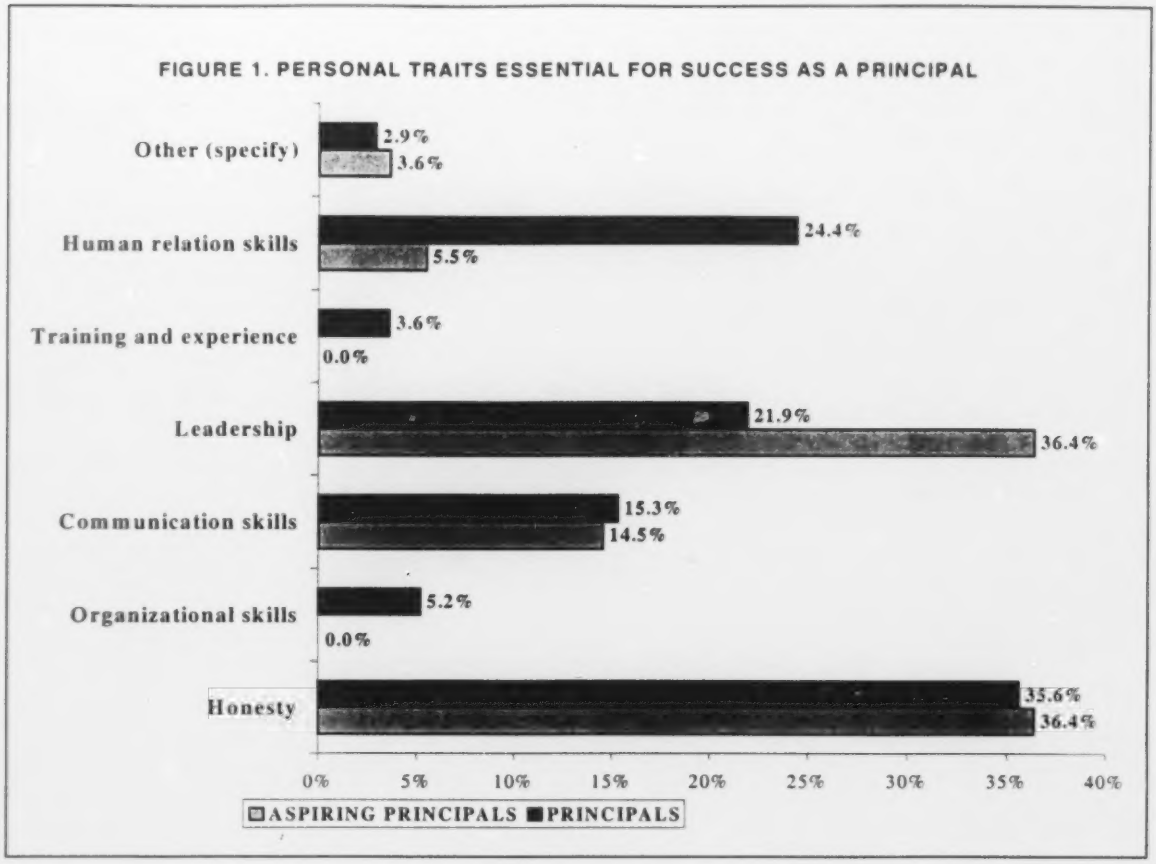
11) Administrative preparation programs have responded to the demands of the workplace.

12) There is a shortage of qualified candidates for principal vacancies at all levels and among all types of schools.

<u>The scene in Indiana</u>

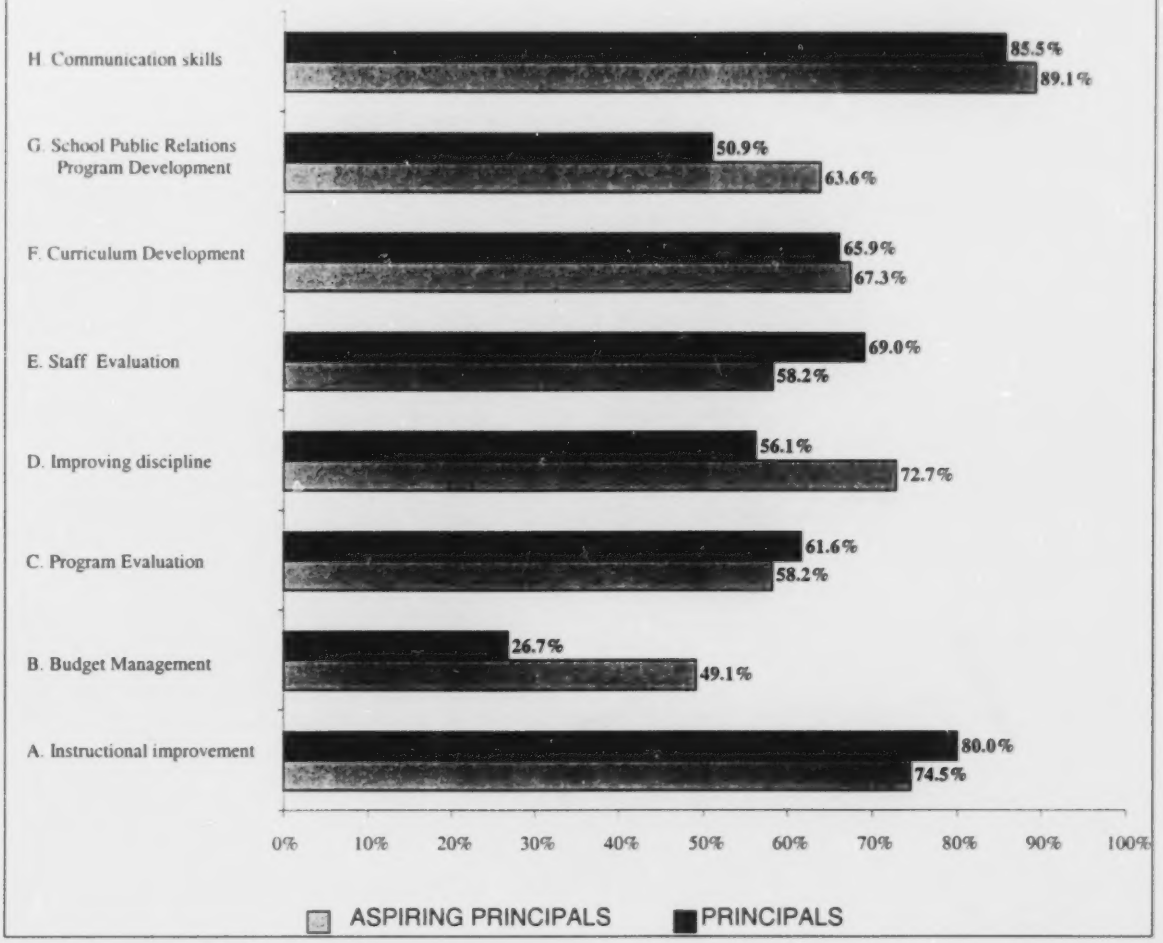
The participants were asked to rank-order seven personal traits necessary for one to be successful as a principal. The principals and aspiring principals agreed on two—Honesty and Leadership. Principals ranked Honesty, Human Relation Skills, and Leadership as most important, while aspiring principals ranked with a slight difference: Honesty, Leadership, and Communication Skills.

Figure 1 shows the principals' and aspiring principals' responses.



Principals ranked items as to their value in the training of principals: 1) Communication Skills, 2) Instructional Improvement, 3) Staff Evaluation, 4) Curriculum Development, 5) Program Evaluation, and 6) Discipline. Aspiring principals ranked the same items: 1) Communication Skills, 2) Instructional Improvement, 3) Improving Discipline, 4) Curriculum Development, 5) School Public Relations/ Program Development, and 6) Budget Management. The differences in these rankings may well reflect the effect of experience as the Principals appeared more comfortable with such items as discipline, public relations and budget management than the aspiring principals who had not had on-the-job experience with these items. Figure 2 provides a graphic of the two groups' responses.

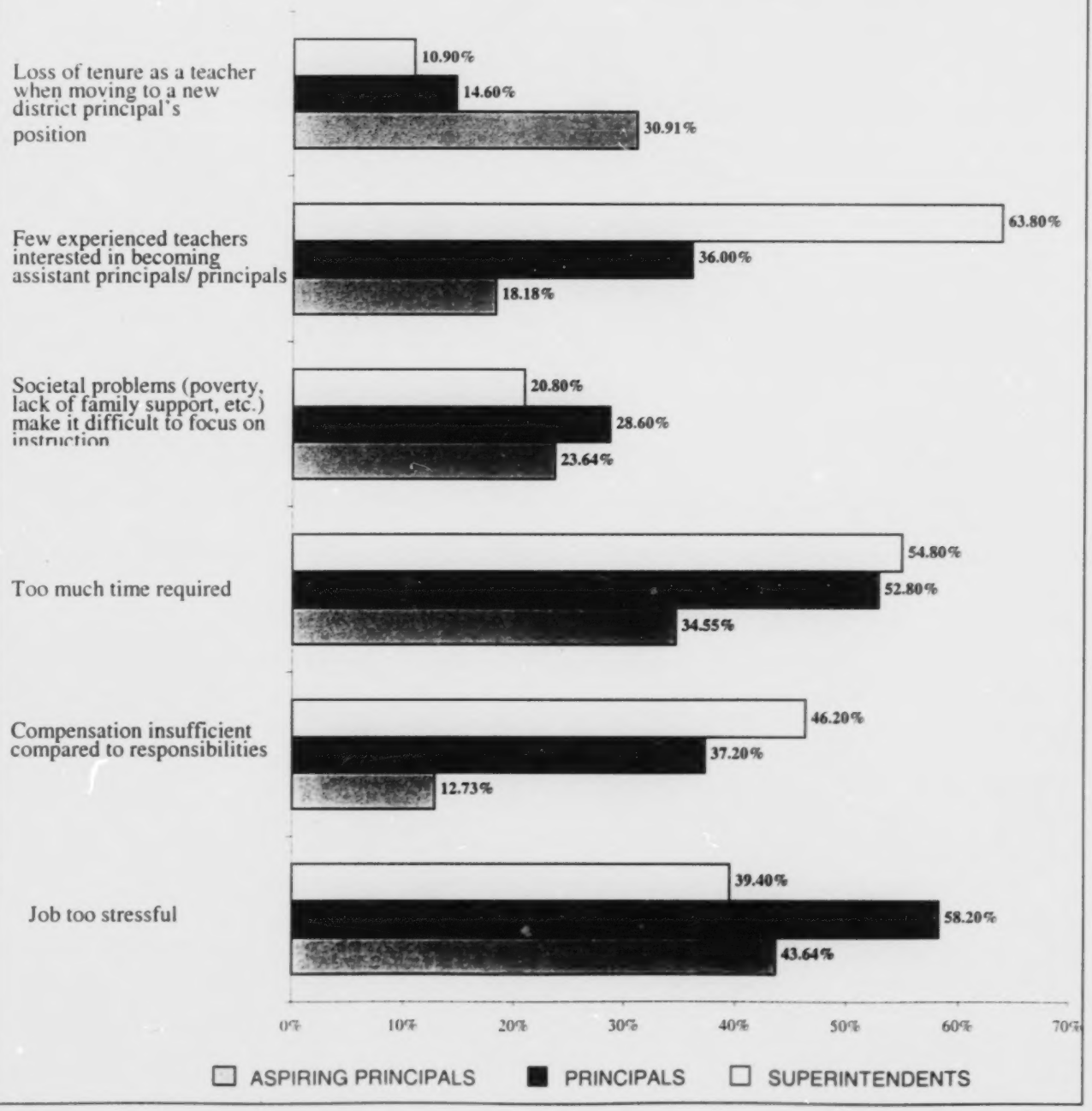
FIGURE 2. VERY VALUABLE SKILL AREAS IN PRINCIPAL TRAINING PROGRAMS



The barriers for a person who was considering the principalship as a career received a high degree of agreement among principals, aspiring principals, and superintendents. Stress of the job was perceived as the most *serious* barrier by principals and aspiring principals, but was perceived as the third most *serious* barrier by superintendents, preceded by "too much time required," and "insufficient compensation compared to the responsibilities of the job."

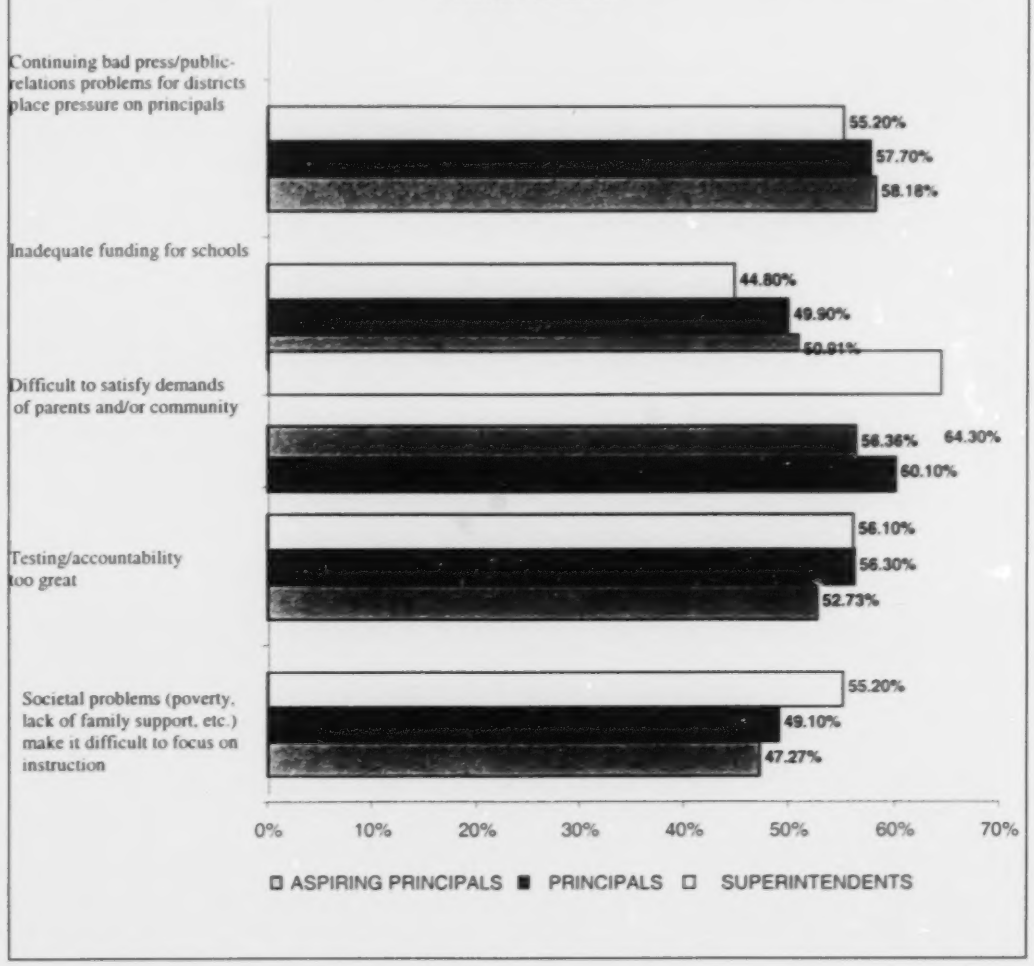
The superintendents who responded viewed the barriers to entering the principalship as a career differently from the principals. Figure 3 shows the responses of the three groups regarding *serious* barriers for someone who was contemplating a career in the principalship.

FIGURE 3. SERIOUS BARRIERS TO ENTERING THE PRINCIPALSHIP



The responses of the principals, aspiring principals and superintendents regarding issues that were *somewhat of a barrier* for someone entering the principalship are displayed in Figure 4.

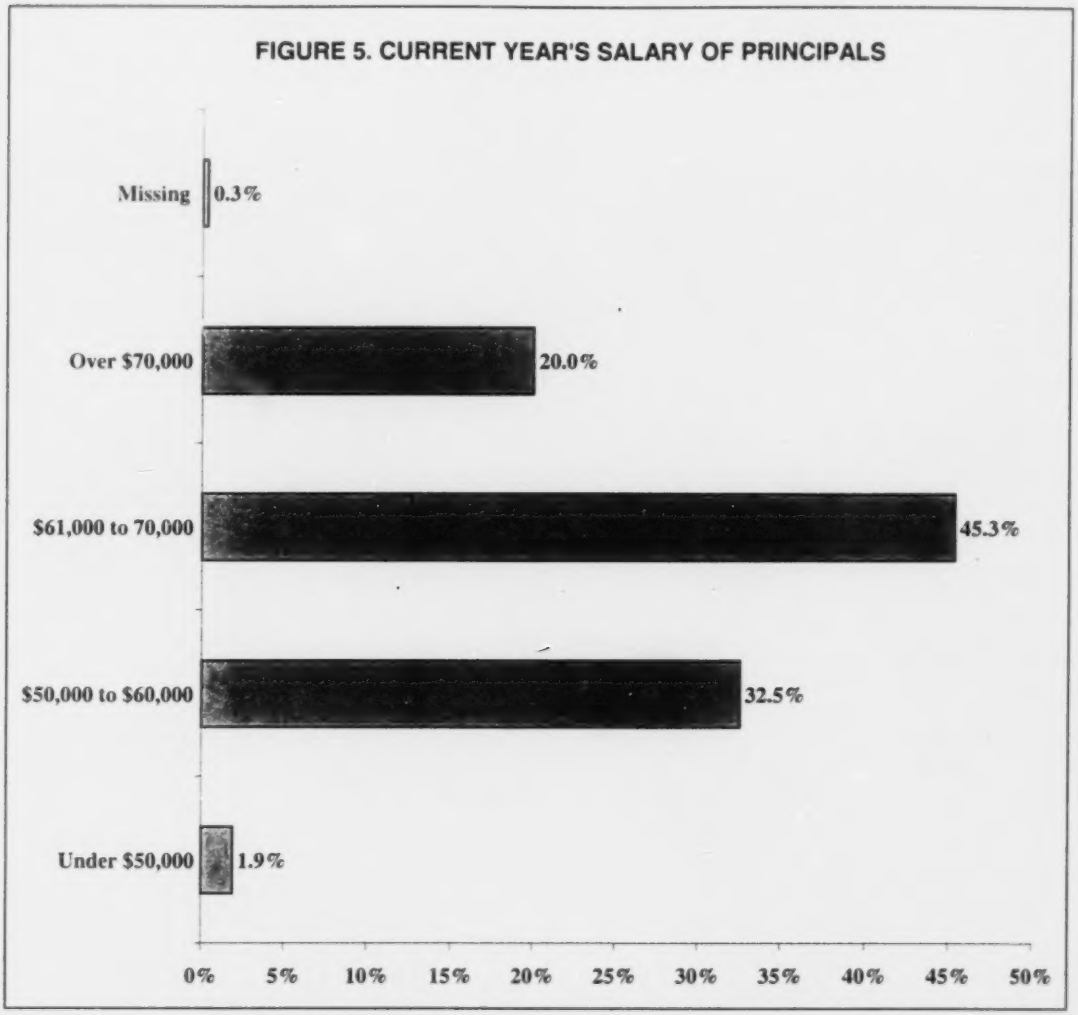
FIGURE 4. ITEMS LISTED AS SOMEWHAT OF A BARRIER TO ENTERING THE PRINCIPALSHIP



A strong majority of the principals indicated they did not plan to remain in the principalship beyond ten years, but almost half indicated they intended to remain in their current positions until retirement. Salary was related to the superintendents' perception that compensation for the principal was not commensurate with the responsibilities of the position. The superintendents viewed this as the most serious barrier, but principals disagreed.

Principals' salaries are an item of great concern. One of the survey items delved into compensation for principals. This information is displayed in Figure 5.

FIGURE 5. CURRENT YEAR'S SALARY OF PRINCIPALS



Almost half of the principals reported salaries in the $61,000 to $70,000 range; another one-third reported their salaries in the $50,000 to $60,000 range, and 20% reported salaries over $70,000.

Most of the principals served in schools that were located in rural communities. Almost half of the principals reported their schools as combinations of grades that would be classified as elementary schools.

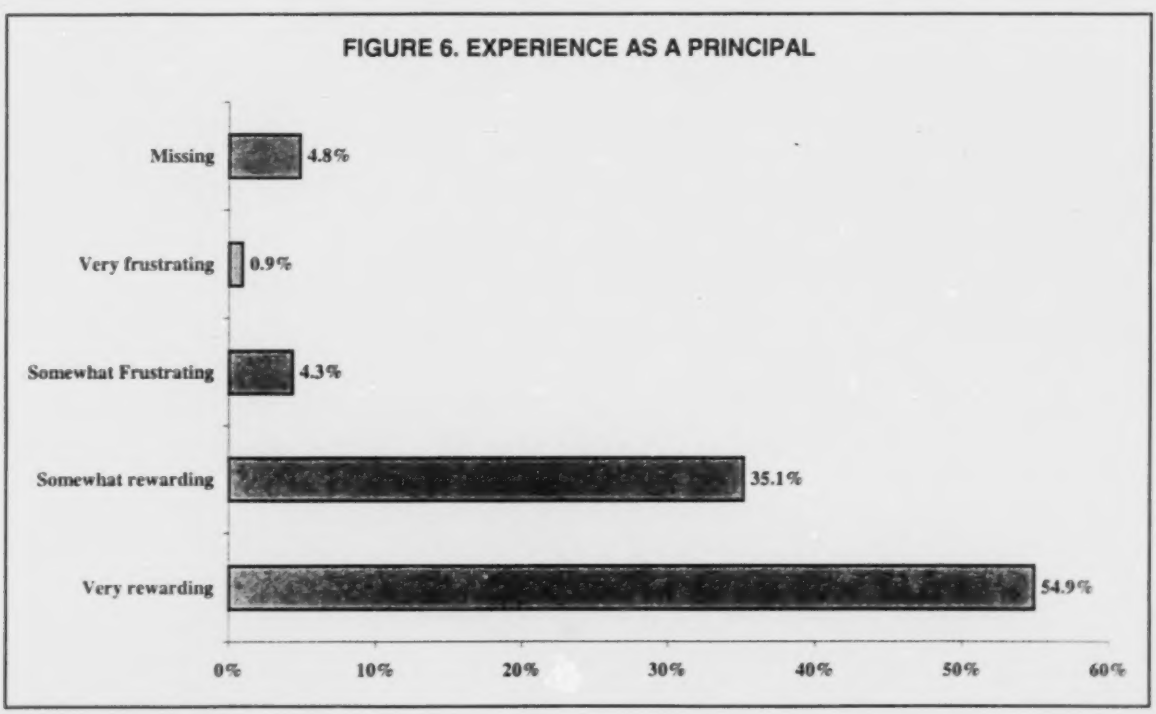
About one-fifth of the principals reported their schools as a combination of grades that would constitute a high school. Slightly less than 20% reported their schools as junior high or middle schools.

In keeping with the majority of those who responded as principals of rural schools, the largest percentage of those responding reported their school as having a student enrollment of 401-600 (36.3%). One-fourth of the principals reported enrollments in the 200-400 range.

A majority of the principals viewed their experience as a principal as "Very Rewarding" and another 35% reported their experience as "Somewhat Rewarding." Less than one percent said their job was "Very Frustrating." Clearly, the principals were not dissatisfied with their jobs.

Figure 6 displays the principals' responses.

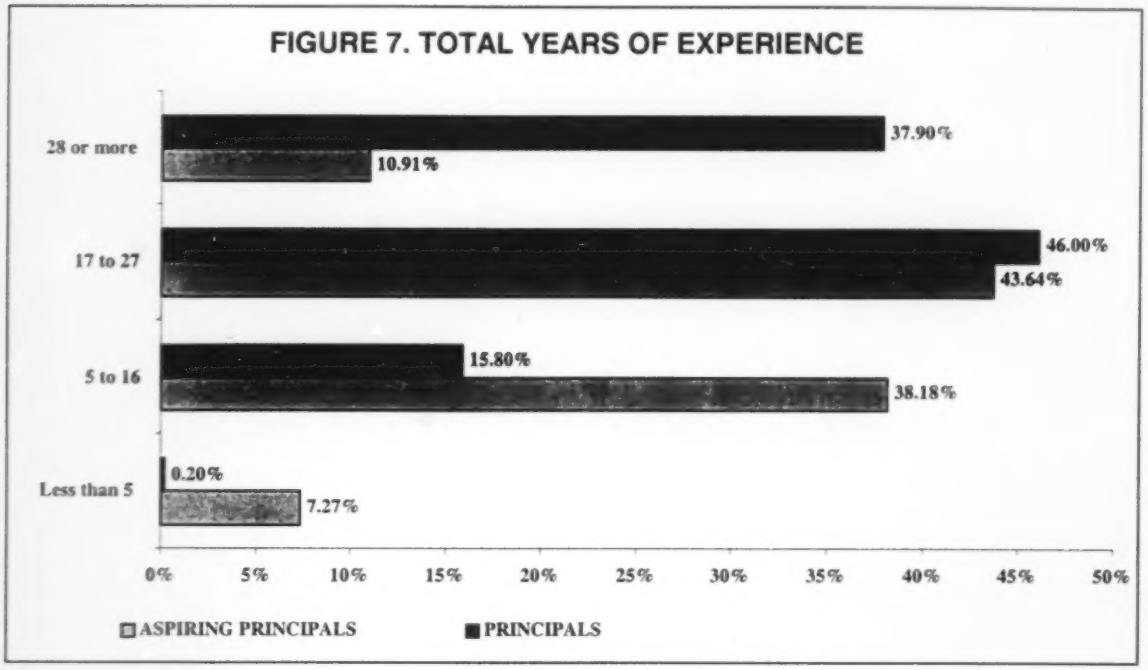
FIGURE 6. EXPERIENCE AS A PRINCIPAL



A high percentage (86.1%) of the principals had encouraged promising teachers to become principals and 13.6% indicated they had not. Thirty-one percent of the principals had tried to recruit minorities into the principalship. Principals are in contact with their teachers on a regular basis. If minority teachers are a part of the principal's faculty, the principal is in a position to know their strengths and weakness as far as leadership potential is concerned. The problem is one of too few minority teachers.

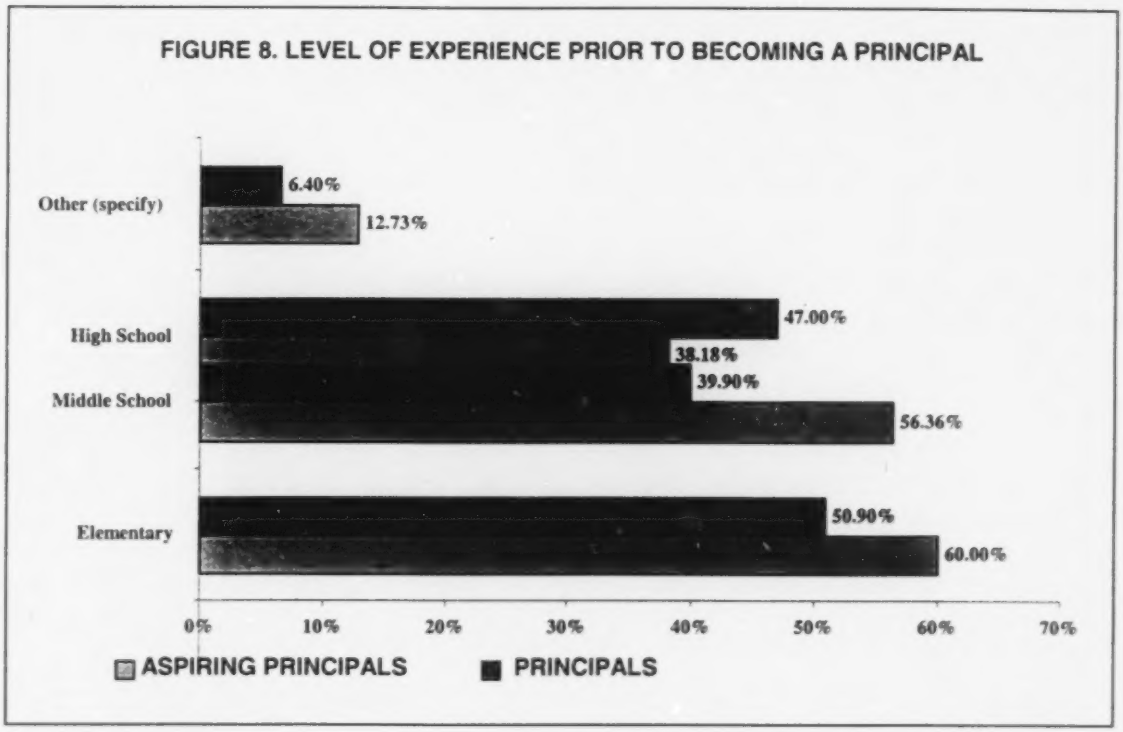
Most of the principals (54%) who responded to the survey had attended the Indiana Principal Leadership Academy. Almost all of the respondents were White (98.6%). Slightly over 70% of the principal respondents were men. Seventy-seven percent of the respondents were natives of Indiana with slightly over five percent from Illinois, four percent from Kentucky, and almost three percent from Ohio. Over 90 percent of the principal respondents were married. Almost half (43.2%) held masters degrees; 27.2% held specialist degrees and just over eight percent held doctoral degrees. Almost 21% held the principal's license only. The majority of the principals (48.4%) were between 30 and 40 years of age when they became principal, but 32% were between 41 and 50 years of age. This information corresponded closely with the number of years the respondents had served as principal and the total number of years in education. Almost 44% had served between three and 10 years as principal; slightly over 28% had served between 11 and 20 years and almost 15% had over 21 years of service as principal. Forty-six percent of the principal respondents had between 17 and 27 years of total experience in education.

Figure 7 gives a view of the total years of educational experience between the principals and aspiring principals.



The combination of age (average age was 48 years) and educational experience are two factors that must be considered in the principal shortage. Qualification for retirement under Indiana Law is determined by two factors: the member's age plus the number of years of educational experience. These two factors must equal 85.

Figure 8 shows the dispersion of educational experience prior to becoming a principal between the principal respondents and aspiring principal respondents



The typical experience a candidate uses to pursue the principalship is through teaching. In most states three years of teaching experience is required to gain a license for the principalship, and it is common to find requirements that a candidate have teaching experience at the level for which the license is sought.

Almost 64% of the aspiring principals thought their principalship preparation program had prepared them to be successful in the principalship. Almost half of this group had between 17 and 27 years of experience in education. Among the aspiring principal respondents, few had attended an Aspiring Principals Conference. Sixty percent of the aspiring principals had acquired teaching experience at the elementary level; over 56% at the middle school level, and just over

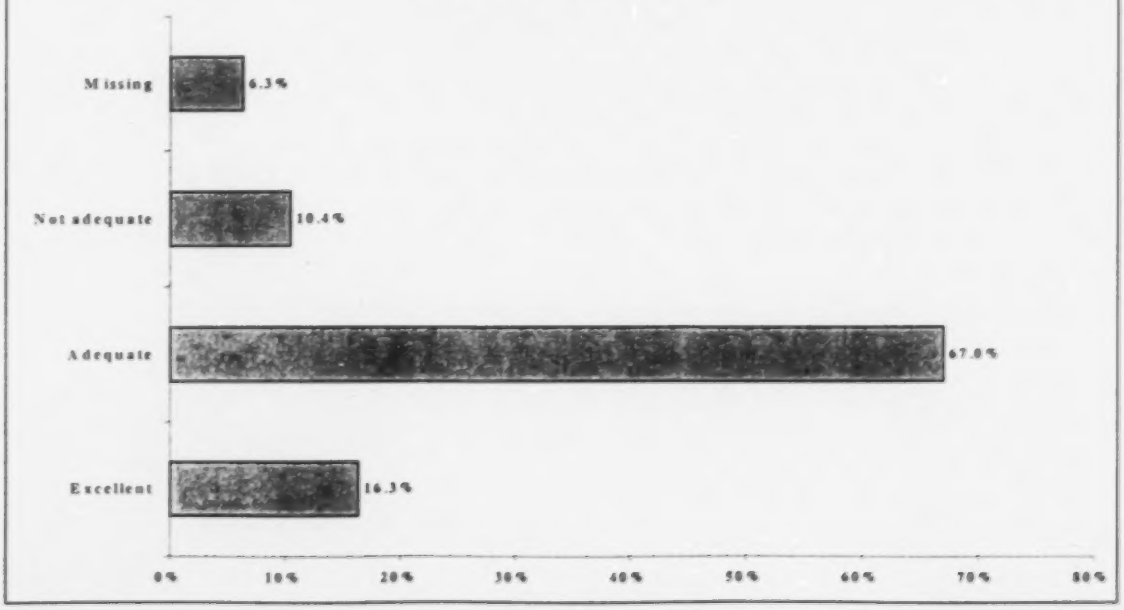
teaching experience at the elementary level; over 56% at the middle school level, and just over 38% at the high school level. Over 56% of the aspiring principals listed elementary education as the level they were seeking to work as a principal; just over 32% listed middle school education, and slightly over 25% listed high school education. Over 70% of the respondents wanted to be principal of a school with a student enrollment of between 300 and 600.

Superintendent's responses

The superintendents reported a "shortage" of candidates in the applicant pool. When the pools for the past three years were examined, more male candidates were present in the pool, the numbers of female candidates had decreased, and more female candidates applied for elementary positions than high school positions. Only ten percent of the superintendents indicated African American candidates had applied for their principal positions, while over 85% indicated they had no African American applicants.

Figure 9 shows the superintendents' perceptions of the candidates' educational preparation.

FIGURE 9. EDUCATIONAL PREPARATION OF CANDIDATES TO PRINCIPAL'S POSITION



Summary and Conclusions

The analysis of data from this study shows little discrepancy from the data reported in the national study by the NCES in 1996. The majority of principals are White; few minorities pursue the principalship, and few females hold high school principal positions. There was a high degree of job satisfaction expressed by the principals who participated in the survey. Principals find their jobs rewarding, even though they are keenly aware of the demands that are placed upon them. Aspiring principals felt their preparation programs were doing an adequate job of preparing them to be principals. Their perceptions of the job closely reflect the perceptions of those currently serving in the job.

Superintendents who had hired principals thought the candidates had good to excellent preparation to be principals. Principals and superintendents shared the concern over the lack of interest in being a school administrator on the part of teachers. The data confirm the shortage of candidates and the concern among superintendents about the quality of candidates in the applicant pool. Concern over the shortage is reflected in almost every administrative conference at every level, be it local, state, regional or national. The slight increase in the average age of principals serves to heighten the concern, since it brings the individual closer to retirement.

Recommendations

The data from this study provide a basis for the following recommendations:

Superintendents need to lead their Boards of Education in:

1. Developing a plan whereby leadership potential is identified and nurtured among teachers and students. This will provide candidates for administrative positions in the future.

2. Developing policies that guarantee principals the authority commensurate with their responsibilities.

3. Making the principal's position more appealing and respected by:

   A. Reducing the work week
   B. Providing more assistants to help with the work load

C. Establishing a different model such as administrative teams, e.g. senior principal, vice principal.
D. Increasing the support services for the principal especially in the area of special education.
E. Assigning some of the duties to teachers on supplemental contracts.
F. Looking carefully at the fringe benefits package to determine if it is an asset in recruiting e.g. long-term contracts, a generous vacation policy.
G. Developing a reimbursement program for candidates who obtain certification credentials.
H. Providing incentives for continuing education e.g. ample travel budgets for conferences.
I. Increasing salaries to be commensurate with the responsibilities of the job.
J. Developing a public relations campaign to increase the attractiveness of the job.
K. Exploring new administrative roles for teachers that are paid or encouraged through release time.

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